

POLICY BRIEF

This note summarises the results of a Peer Learning Activity, which has been prepared by an independent expert. The report is based on a peer learning activity where policymakers and practitioners from a number of countries exchanged ideas and experiences on an issue of shared policy interest. This report reflects the opinions of the participants and does not constitute an official European Commission or ENQA-VET position.

Peer Learning Activity

On Quality Assurance of Evaluation Procedures

Countries taking part: AU, BU, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, FI, IT, LU, RO, SI, UK

SUMMARY

This policy note is based on the peer learning activity (PLA) held in Fulda, Germany, in March 2009. It brings together the contributions made by 13 European countries reflecting on quality assurance and management in vocational education and training (VET) focusing in quality management, evaluation and controlling in VET systems (full PLA report is available on the Network's website at www.engavet.eu).

<p>POLICY CONTEXT</p>	<p>ENQA-VET's peer learning activities are an important tool in promoting quality assurance (QA) in Vocational Education and Training (VET), supporting mutual learning between Member States and they play an important role in the implementation of the ENQA-VET work programme.</p> <p><i>Peer learning is a policy learning strategy that includes knowledge sharing and utilises local experience on a relevant policy topic.</i></p> <p>PLAs should be viewed in the context of the Open Method of Coordination which is based on promoting mutual trust by disseminating best practices, respecting subsidiarity in the education field and achieving greater convergence among Member States towards the achievement of European goals.</p>
<p>PLA OBJECTIVE</p>	<p>WHY A PLA ON QA OF EVALUATION PROCEDURES?</p> <hr/> <p>This peer learning activity aimed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • promote cooperation in quality assurance (QA) • build on common methodological approaches which improve QA; and • disseminate best practice on the management of change and improvement in VET
<p>EMERGING POLICY ISSUES from PLA on Quality Assurance procedures on Evaluation</p>	<p>Because the management of VET systems among Member States is pre-determined by culture and existing/internal building processes, the key requirements in ensuring the ongoing development of QA in evaluation procedures are:</p> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition of these cultural and historical differences • Use of common European tools and frameworks (i.e. EQF, EQARF, ECVET, etc) • Focus on improvement and ongoing development processes • Follow the European partnership approach to working with key players at every stage of the process <p>Common problems related to QA procedures for evaluation of VET systems:</p> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of common procedures for quality evaluation and quality improvements within national systems • Lack of motivation and involvement of relevant stakeholders in the evaluation procedures/processes (i.e. employers, teachers-trainers, customers). • Lack of awareness of the benefits attached to the EQARF model as a efficient model to support institutional autonomy, decentralisation and a culture of quality • Low social reputation of VET • Complexity of reporting on quality
<p>POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS At European level there is a need to:</p>	<p>How to enhance the quality assurance aspect of the evaluation procedures for VET?</p> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support transnational evaluation pilot projects as a tool for mutual learning and promotion of successful QA initiatives to a wider audience • Use indicators for benchmarking • Ensure common mechanisms to match the provision of VET with labour market requirements • Build the management of quality assurance on learning outcomes in order to promote learners mobility into higher education and into the common labour market
<p>At National level there is a need for:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support a quality evaluation culture for VET based on guidelines, cooperation and exchange of good practices involving all relevant stakeholders • Establish a European network of VET providers • Increase the attractiveness of VET • Ensure a balance between the establishment and use of European QA common tools and frameworks and national/local peculiarities/needs

At VET provider level there is a need for:

- National education standards and national qualification frameworks based on outcomes and/or European tools and frameworks
- Systematic review of QA procedures linking them to the evaluation process
- QA procedures for teacher and trainer's qualifications
- Empowerment of all actors involved in VET (including policy-decision makers) in reporting on quality
- Public promotion and communication about the importance of evaluation among relevant stakeholders
- Greater involvement of employers
- Fostering a common understanding of quality evaluation procedures
- Assessment model and tools providing common guidelines to be simplified
- Greater cooperation between enterprises and VET providers
- Standardised self-evaluation procedures on the provision of occupational training
- Involvement in the evaluation report process at system level
- Systematic personnel development and upgrading of their qualifications
- Modernisation of equipment, infrastructure and methods (including textbook) for practical training
- Focusing school reports on non-financial indicators

ANALYSIS: Use of EQARF to report on progress among Member States

Purpose and Plan

The PLA on quality assurance procedures for evaluation provides an interesting example of the use of the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework (EQARF) as the instrument to exchange experiences and capture best practices. The following emerged:

- In many countries, the national evaluation system covers both general education and VET (AU, BU, CZ, FI, LU, RO)
- In these cases, the responsibility for the evaluation of the system is centralised under a public/semi-public authority
- In several countries, VET providers (schools and enterprises) are involved in the evaluation process
- Very often, there is a lack of defined priorities for the strategic decisions

Implementation

- Limited social partners involvement in the system evaluation process
- In general, there is a lack of resources for systematic and coordinated internal and external evaluation
- The role of the different players/evaluation bodies within the system's evaluation development and implementation is not always clearly defined/coordinated

Assessment and Evaluation

- In many countries, the evaluation in VET is undertaken periodically
- In some countries, the evaluation process is based on standardised indicators; the main indicators used in national contexts are:

MAIN STANDARDISED INDICATORS

- Educational results/achievements
- Completion rate/qualification take-up
- Placement in labour market/graduates employment rate
- Share of students drop-outs/ repeats
- Number of students per teacher
- Average number of students per class
- Competences/qualifications of teachers
- Financial conditions/resources
- Resources for personnel education and training
- Compliance of the school educational programme with legal regulations

MAIN NON STANDARDISED INDICATORS

- General/customer satisfaction
- Meeting students needs
- Career prospects
- Meeting employer needs
- Atmosphere at school and in class
- Integration of the gender dimension
- Systematic personnel development
- Leadership and management
- Up-to-date innovative programmes
- Partnership with business community and interest groups
- International orientation of the education and training programmes

Feedback and Procedures for Change	<p>The main tools and procedures for change used by Member States are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pilot projects and rewarding of successful quality assurance system/initiatives • Providers' self-assessment • Bench-marking/learning-marking • Publishing information on performance in the form of reports, evaluation documents, annual reports on implementation made by schools • Laws and Ministerial decrees • Communication (meetings) with the key players • Training for teacher and trainers • Technical documents/guidelines • Comparison with other European experiences • Consultation process and involvement of employers
CHALLENGES for QA of Evaluation Procedures Structural Challenges	<p>Participants identified four areas of major challenge faced by QA procedures for the management and evaluation of VET as follows:</p> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of common structures, like National and/or European qualification frameworks, within systems' local conditions, tradition and needs • Introduction of standardised systems in evaluation and coordinated action among evaluation player/agencies • Integration of a lifelong learning perspective within the evaluation process • Improvement of the direct involvement of decision makers at ministerial level
Quality Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning from higher education structures and approaches • Developing learning and comparison opportunities for decision makers and experts • Simplifying assessment model and tools for management and teachers • Fostering the partnership approaches between relevant stakeholders (providers, employers, students, parents, teachers/trainers).
Measurement Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion and utilisation of self-evaluation, external and internal evaluation in a coherent manner • National evaluation criteria for exams
Current economic Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of investment in VET • Opening up of the European labour market • Ageing population which needs to be re-skilled